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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 001508

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AF/S FOR B. NEULING  
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVILLE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [SOCI](#) [ELAB](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#) [MDC](#)  
SUBJECT: MDC TALKS INCONCLUSIVE; SPLIT LOOMING?

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher Dell under Section 1.4 b/d

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Summary  
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1. (C) Brian Raftopolous, mediator in the opposition MDC's efforts to bridge the schism in the party over the Senate elections, told poloff on November 2 Party President Morgan Tsvangirai had won the battle for popular support for an

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election boycott but that his opponents in the party leadership wanted an apology from him for ignoring party procedures and wanted him to discipline his &kitchen cabinet8 before agreeing to the boycott. Raftopolous said he had proposed such a compromise at the end of the leadership,s October 27 meeting. However, both factions had hardened their positions prior to the October 31 meeting and he was no longer optimistic that the compromise would be agreed upon. A reconvened National Council meeting scheduled for November 5 would attempt to resolve critical differences but could instead result in a &separation8 that could lead to a later divorce. Raftopolous added that civil society leaders strongly backed Tsvangirai and were working with him on a strategy to ramp up confrontation with the regime. End Summary.

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Ncube Faction's "Rule of Law" Concerns  
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2. (C) In a meeting at his University of Zimbabwe office, the UZ political science professor (who is also associated with the Zimbabwe Crisis Coalition and Transparency International) updated poloff on MDC talks he had been mediating over the last two weeks. Raftopolous said the party,s Ndebele leadership could not stomach yielding elected seats to ZANU-PF and wanted to reinforce their political power in Matabeleland. That said, they now realized that Tsvangirai had popular support on his side. However, the Ncube faction was upset over Tsvangirai's breach of party procedures and constitution in overriding the National Council's decision to participate in the elections. This "rule of law" issue was especially important to Ncube, a lawyer. Raftopolous said he was convinced that Ncube had absolutely no pretensions to national political leadership or to replace Tsvangirai atop the party, but needed some accommodation on process concerns.

3. (C) According to Raftopolous, most in the Ncube faction were still loyal to Tsvangirai but viewed the clique around him as unelected, self-serving individuals who exerted "undemocratic" influences on the party and sought to counter established party structures, especially the authority of the National Executive or "Top Six" (Tsvangirai, Secretary-General Ncube, VP Gibson Sibanda, Deputy Sec-Gen

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Gift Chimanikire, Chairman Isaac Matongo, and Treasurer Fletcher Dhulini-Ncube). Tsvangirai allies most objectionable to the Ncube faction in this regard were Ian Makoni, Dennis Murira and Gandhi Mudzingwa. Raftopolous said he had seen internal party files documenting allegations of intra-party intimidation and violence although he could not evaluate their veracity. He said the documents evinced a possible plan by Tsvangirai supporters to oust Ncube, Sibanda, and Dhulini-Ncube ahead of the Party Congress.

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Tsvangirai Impelled by Conviction, Leadership Imperative  
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4. (C) Raftopolous said that for his part Tsvangirai was convinced of the wisdom of an election boycott and had been taken aback by what he saw as a challenge to his leadership. He had been unprepared for the National Council vote against the boycott and perceived it as an affront to his authority. Intra-party criticism of "his" people and the recent meeting between Top Six principals and South African President Mbeki

only fueled Tsvangirai's suspicions. Raftopolous expressed concern that Tsvangirai was being advised especially poorly by his kitchen cabinet, who feared for their future in an accommodation and seemed hell-bent on ousting the Ncube faction.

15. (C) Raftopolous said that he personally agreed with Tsvangirai on the participation issue as did the vast

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majority of the party,s rank and file. However, a victory on that issue could prove to be Pyrrhic if not achieved properly. Addressing "democracy/rule of law" issues meaningfully was essential - in part to keep the Ncube faction on board but, more importantly, such issues would continue to hamstring the party significantly if not corrected. Raftopolous said he had privately pressed Tsvangirai on the matter and had been hopeful that Tsvangirai

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would be prepared to acknowledge some fault in the interest of keeping crucial disaffected constituencies on board and assuring the party's long term effectiveness.

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Prospective Compromise Yielding to Re-Polarization  
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16. (C) In the October 27 meeting, Raftopolous said he had proposed a compromise: guided by the Top Six's recommendations, the National Council would rescind its earlier vote and approve a boycott, and the President would acknowledge mistakes in previously bypassing party procedures. All would agree to rationalize party structures and lines of authority in accordance with the constitution and party elections. Raftopolous said Tsvangirai and Ncube had appeared to want a reconciliation and each side initially seemed inclined to accept the compromise.

17. (C) However, Raftopolous said when the leadership reconvened on October 31, each side appeared to have hardened its position and no longer appeared prepared to compromise. As a result, he said he had ceased mediation efforts for now. There was now a real possibility that the National Council meeting scheduled for November 5 could result in a separation followed by a more formal "divorce" at the National Congress later in the year.

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MDC-Civil Society Collaboration Continues  
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18. (C) Raftopolous said most of civil society had sided with Tsvangirai in his intra-party travails, supported a boycott,

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and was willing to overlook procedural improprieties in favor of moving forward with more public action. Tsvangirai had been meeting periodically with the National Constitutional Assembly's Lovemore Madhuku and the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union's Wellington Chibebe and Lovemore Matombo to reinvigorate plans for a way forward. Buoyed by his intra-party scrap and engagement with civil society, Tsvangirai seemed to be gaining energy to confront the regime

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more forcefully again.

19. (C) Raftopolous said ZCTU was weak and unprepared to contribute meaningfully to a confrontation with the regime. However, the MDC and NCA, joined by resident associations and others in civil society, had enough wherewithal to do something. He reported that the NCA had made substantial progress in connecting with rural populations but that urban centers still provided the optimal venues for public action, provided action was sufficiently diffuse. Raftopolous concluded that the regime was increasingly concerned about a resurgence of public opposition.

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Comment  
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10. (C) While there is considerable risk that personal hubris could lead to a real split in the MDC even though the principal cause of disagreement has been resolved in Tsvangirai's favor, we still believe that the party is going

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through a necessary catharsis as it struggles to define itself. While there has been much hand-wringing about a possible MDC split being "tragic," it should be remembered that catharsis and the resolution of impossible tensions was the very point of the ancient tragedies.

DELL